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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SUGGESTS GIVING THE GIFT OF
HEALTH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Still searching for the perfect holiday gifts for your friends and family? In this season of giving, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has some suggestions that will help keep your family healthy and safe throughout the year. Try some of these ideas to encourage those on your shopping list to get in shape, eat right and prepare for emergencies.

- Give your family the gift of security with an emergency preparedness kit. Ready-made kits are widely available and may include items such as first aid supplies, flashlights, battery operated radios, gloves and food bars. Or you can assemble your own kit. For a checklist of supplies to include, go to www.vdh.virginia.gov/epr and click on planning.
- We all know someone who tries to exercise, but needs some extra motivation. A pedometer will help measure the strides they take each day toward getting in shape. Workout gear or a gym membership can also provide inspiration. Offer to exercise together and you'll receive the gift of physical fitness, too.
- Teach kids the joy of exercise with active gifts. Instead of the newest video game or DVD, give the children in your life jump ropes, bicycles, sports equipment, dance gear or games that encourage physical activity.
- When giving bicycles, scooters, skates and other sports equipment, make sure to include appropriate safety gear such as helmets, knee and elbow pads and wrist guards.
- Instead of taking the standard bottle of wine or plate of cookies to a holiday party, bring your hosts a basket of healthy treats, such as fresh fruit and nuts.
- Protect your family all year long by purchasing a combination carbon monoxide and smoke alarm for your home and theirs.
- Know someone who loves to cook? Pick out a cookbook that offers delicious light and healthy meal ideas.
- Help keep your family's teeth sparkling and healthy. Stuff stockings with toothpaste, toothbrushes and dental floss.
- Stress can drain energy and make existing medical problems worse. Help your frazzled loved ones de-stress with items they can use to pamper themselves at home.
- Many of the older people in our lives are on fixed incomes. Help them stay healthy by giving a basket of nutritious food, bus passes to get to the doctor or gift certificates for the pharmacy or grocery store. You can also help with the high cost of heating their home by contacting the utility company to pay part of their winter bill.

For more information about how to keep your family safe and healthy at any time of the year, visit the VDH Web site, www.vdh.virginia.gov.